

EQUAL RIGHTS AMMENDMENT THE FEMININE PERSPECTIVE

THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMMENDMENT
by Susan Satterthwaite &
Joann Leake

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is the constitutional basis for all legal equality of women in the U.S.A. It reads: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." (Women's Rights Almanac). A very simple statement, indeed, but its implications for the fair and equal treatment of women in all areas of American life are immense.

The first equal rights amendment was proposed by the Woman's Party back in 1923 as a step toward gaining the basic human rights due women as well as men. This first proposal caused quite a stir with the men and women of that time. Over the next fifty or so years, many argued over what would be the best way to establish equality for women. Gaining support for this proposal was a slow process.

It is argued that the present form of the ERA is confusing and ambiguous because it does not state the specific effects it will have on present laws concerning such important areas as child support, alimony, division of property, and military service, particularly the draft.

(Note: the U.S. Congress turned down the proposal to draft women into military service

a few weeks ago). Opponents of the ERA, notably Phyllis Schlafly, say that this unclear element will lead to many years of court battles as to the application of the amendment in specific cases. Proponents of the ERA claim that the amendment will work as a catalyst to bring these important issues into the public eye and get them clarified as soon as possible. Opponents also claim that if ERA is put into effect, women will no longer be protected against certain types of exploitation in the job market, such as forced overtime or working at jobs that they physically cannot handle. Proponents respond that protective laws now in existence do not really "protect" women at all, but serve to keep women out of well paying positions and keep them in poor paying and inferior jobs.

Some still complain that the ERA will remove protection for those women who have "special family responsibilities". Others feel that only a very few women need these types of protections, so in that case no one should have them. Still others would give up their "right to equality" in order to attain alimony and child support. On the other hand, the most determined feminists claim that service in the military is a requirement and

responsibility of all citizens, therefore, women should be drafted equally with men. Marriage and parenthood could be grounds for the deferment of men and women on an equal basis, while pregnancy could be grounds for deferment on the basis of temporary physical disability.

Congress passed the ERA in 1972, giving the States seven years to ratify it. A three-fourths majority (38 states) is necessary to ratify it, but as of 1977, only 35 states had done so. Congress extended the ratification date to Oct. 20, 1982. If women want a guarantee against discrimination in all areas of society

on the basis of their sex, women want to stand as the rightful equals of men, then they are compelled to take up the challenge of destroying the sex role idea. Destruction of this sex-role idea starts with a basic guarantee of civil

equality, such as the equal rights amendment to the United States constitution. From there, changes, modifications and revisions take place as a conse-

quence of instituting a basic right, much like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. By completing that puzzle, what was formerly fragmented and unclear crystallizes into a cohesive meaningful whole.

BUSINESS \$OCIETY

By Holly MacDonald

Hi there. We hope that all of you survived the Caribbean Pub and that the jet lag the next day wasn't too distracting. But wait. Before another word is written, a point that is constantly being made by our Senior Class is "Where are the juniors, sophomores, and freshmen?" That's right, underclassmen. You're being poorly represented at fun filled events and you are really missing some good times. There's still time for a reprieve, so let's turn out in large numbers for future events and show who really has the SPIRIT.

The Business Man's Dinner, which everyone has been looking forward to, has been finalized for March 24. The guest speaker is none other than Brian Peckford, Premier of Newfoundland. How can you pass this event up? The food will be fabulous, the speaker interesting, and the company exciting. So, circle March 24th on your calendar, and start asking your friends if they're going.

The Business Society is sponsoring a one day curling bonspiel on Friday, March 14th, at the Belvedere Golf Club. The first draw will be around 1 pm, so having classes will be no excuse. Never tried curling? Don't worry, this is a fun 'spiel, and everyone is welcome. Watch for posters explaining sign up procedures.

Those attractive mugs you have been hearing about with the eye catching decals should arrive in a few short weeks. A real collectors item, these mugs will grace anyone's showcase, so don't forget to pick one up.

Congratulations are extended to the Business Hockey team who have shown such initiative in funding their tournament at Acadia. Best of luck boys. The boys asked me to express their gratitude to Prof R. Ellison whose donation was missed in last week's article.

Here's hoping everyone aces their midterms and has their wildest fantasies come true on March break. See you later....

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For more information, contact: Mrs. Magda Davey, Faculty of Graduate Studies, York University, Downsview (Toronto), Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3. Telephone (416) 667-2426.

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